

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 20-24, 28, 31, 32, 36 and 42 are pending. In the office action, all claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and/or §103(a) over United States Patent No. 5,108,417 (Sawyer) alone or in view of 5,104,404 (Wolff).

In responding to Applicant's prior arguments (page 4 of the Office Action), the Examiner noted that the left and right sides of the Sawyer strut form sharp corners at their junctions with the top and bottom sides, but that Applicant's claims were silent as to shape of the intersection between the top and bottom side and left and right sides.

By the present amendment, independent claims 20 and 31 have been amended to specifically recite that the top and bottom circumferential sides of the strut are joined together through a continuously curved left side and a continuously curved right side such that the transverse cross sectional configuration of the strut is devoid of sharp corners. This is fully consistent with Applicant's drawings and written description (see, for example, Figures 3A and 3B and corresponding detailed description set forth at pages 12-13). No new matter has been added.

Accordingly, as amended, for the reasons stated above and others not specifically articulated here, independent claims 20 and 31 are believed to be patentably distinguishable over Sawyer, Wolff and all other prior art of record. Dependent claims 21-24, 28, 32, 36 and 42 further limit or add to the novel and unobvious subject matter of the independent claims and, thus, are distinguishable over the prior art on at least the same grounds as the independent claims.

Reconsideration and issuance of notice of allowance is earnestly solicited. No fee is seen to be due in connection with the filing of this response. However, if any fee is properly deemed to be due in connection with this filing, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to deduct such fee from Deposit Account No. 01-2525. If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would in any way expedite the prosecution of the application, please do not hesitate to call the undersigned at telephone (978) 739-3250.

Respectfully submitted,
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